

Millions of people worldwide have been devastated by the Tobacco epidemic that has been gaining ground in many countries of the world. The World Health Organization attributes four and a half million deaths a year to tobacco use to this epidemic, a figure expected to rise to 8.4 million by the year 2020, 70% of whom will be in developing countries.

Tobacco use is considered one of the urgent problems facing all countries in the region including the Gulf States, where the prevalence of smoking among the young people had already reached %. In the United Arab Emirates 14.3% of young males, 24% of adult males, 2.9% of young females and 1% of adult females are current cigarette smokers, and due to their continuous exposure to tobacco smoke at home and in public place their numbers is expected to increase systematically in the future.

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey clearly indicates that a formidable number of youth lack basic knowledge on the health hazards related to tobacco use. Furthermore, they are under the false impression that cigarette smoking will improve their image and make them more attractive and popular. The presence of an environment conducive to smoking that encourages young people to start smoking at an early age remains to be the most important factor in the spread of this serious problem.

The results of this survey imply the urgent need to take immediate measures to control the tobacco epidemic and consequently decrease the burden of smoking-related diseases. Accelerating the recommendations of the Council of Health Ministers of the GCC Countries through the implementation of preventive strategies capable of protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of future generations will be a step in the right direction.

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